

A

DISCOURSE

UPON

THE DURATION

OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

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To the Members of the Presbyterian Church in Petersburg.

THIS Discourse, as you know, was delivered in your Church, at the Meeting of the Synod of Virginia. Solicited by many to permit its publication, I do so, hoping it may be of some use, in establishing your minds and those of others in a doctrine, which it can profit no man to reject, and which, if revealed, it is no man's right to gainsay, but every man's duty to keep before his eyes, that he may guard his frail nature from sin by the most powerful of all motives. I dedicate this Discourse to you, for whom, the most partial acquaintance has sufficed, to inspire me with the sincerest affection. But I am aware that its publication, though designed to extend its usefulness, will lessen its reputation; because many defects of style, which circumstances do not permit me to amend, will appear in the perusal, which the interest of a first hearing concealed from notice. Wishing your Pastor, yourselves, and your whole city the choicest gifts of Heaven, I commit to you what, I fear your love of truth has induced you to esteem above its merits.

HENRY RUFFNER.

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THE TEXT.

"These shall go away into everlasting punishment."

MATT. xxv. 46, First clause.

WHETHER sinners, who die unconverted and un-sanctified, shall suffer endless punishment in Hell ; or whether they shall be finally released from all suffering by losing their existence, or by ascending to heaven—is the question which now demands your solemn consideration. I take for granted that such persons will suffer punishment after death. To deny all future punishment is too notoriously un-scriptural, unreasonable, and mischievous, to require an argument. But what is to be the duration of the wrath to come? This is the momentous subject of our discourse. It may be considered in two points of view ; as a question of reason, and as a doctrine of revelation. As believers in revelation we are bound to receive its decisions, without perverting its language to suit our private notions. Hence I might be excused for omitting any argument founded upon the fallible reason of man. But on this subject especially, our minds are naturally so warped by prejudices, and so prone to flattering delusions, that I think it necessary to make some observations upon the view, which reason ought to

take of the question before us. My observations will aim to establish this proposition, namely,

That reason alone cannot determine whether future punishment will be temporary or eternal.

The duration of it depends not upon the reason of man, but the judgment of God. Now the reason of man and the judgment of God may greatly differ in a case of so mysterious a nature. Many things may cause such a difference. I will briefly suggest a few.

1. Our views of the subject are naturally dark and partial. The circle of our knowledge is but a span wide; God at once looks through the universe. We see the fitness and connexion of a few things within our little circle of space and time. God, who has linked all things together, comprehends the whole nature, bearing, and operation of each thing,—what influence it will have throughout creation, and throughout eternity. We are liable to mistaken views even of the common things within our sphere of action. How then shall we safely judge the measures of Jehovah's wisdom in administering the affairs of universal, everlasting government?

Does a child fully understand the administration of justice in our civil courts, where men judge men, for merely human and secular purposes? Would you trust the understanding of a child, to frame those penal laws which are to guard your worldly interests? Then why trust your own understanding to determine the penalty of the Divine law, when the

glory of God and the general welfare of the everlasting universe are staked upon the force, and authority of that law? There is a measurable proportion between the understanding of a child and a man:—between your understanding and God's, there is all the difference between littleness and infinity. Can we measure the evil and guilt of sinning against our God? Can we limit the claims of his justice? Can we decide what way of administering his infinite government, would best answer the united ends of justice and benevolence? Can we look with infallible comprehension through all the relations of all things, trace the operation and consequences of the eternal laws under every possible plan of administration? Can we certainly tell whether temporary or everlasting punishment be best calculated to display infinite justice, and hatred of sin in God, to secure general reverence and obedience to law, to produce a horror of sin in created minds, and finally to secure by proper moral means the greatest quantity of happiness in creation? We cannot pretend to such boundless intelligence. Consequently we are incapable of judging, by reason alone, whether God will inflict temporary or eternal punishment in the world to come.

2. God has set before our eyes many examples of the difference between his views and ours. The poet says truly,

The ways of Providence are dark and intricate,
Puzzled with mazes and perplexed with errors,
Our understanding traces them in vain.

What a different course does Providence often take from what we would have taken, if events had been under our control ! How many things are permitted, which we know not how to reconcile with our ideas of infinite goodness in the Disposer of events ! If we, whose goodness is so imperfect, had planned the world, would we have given place to the fall of man, the propagation of a sinful posterity, the prevalence of wickedness, the toils of life, the pains of the body, the sorrows of the heart, the terrors of death—the destroying scourges of flood, fire, and storm—of famine pestilence and war,—sweeping away with equal rage the good and the bad, the vigour of manhood and the tenderness of infancy ? Would you have suffered your creation to be a vale of tears, a field of blood, a region of sin and death ? Ah, when you contemplate the weeping, bleeding, dying multitudes around you ; then with an aching heart and a bewildered understanding, you find your faith in the infinite goodness of God put to the severest trial : and with deep conviction you exclaim, “Who hath known the mind of the Lord ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !” But you gain some relief for your labouring mind, by reflecting that notwithstanding the real and unaccountable evils of this world, enjoyment is mingled with suffering, virtue with vice ; the suffering you attribute to unsearchable wisdom and necessary justice ; the comforts of life and the sunshine of the soul, to the

direct operations of infinite goodness: even the miseries which justice sends, you ascribe to mysterious love working by means above your comprehension. Yet you are utterly incapable of discerning how so much evil is consistent with the purposes of Divine goodness. Convinced by facts and experience, of your total incompetency to ascertain the relation between Divine goodness and human suffering, and to adjust the proportion between Divine justice and the punishment of sinners—will you venture to determine what duration of future evil God may see fit to connect with the impenitent sinner's guilt? If the views and plan of God are so different from what you would have expected, in relation to the evils of this world, with which you are best acquainted; can you see so clearly through the shadow of death into the world to come, as to pronounce that sin and punishment will come to an end? Whatever you may be disposed to think or to hope, may not your reasoning be erroneous, as much now as it would have been, if you had lived and reasoned upon this world before its realities were unfolded?

3. There are two ways of limiting punishment;—in degree, and in duration. A man may suffer a great deal in a short time,—and he may suffer long yet suffer comparatively little. Two men may be unhappy for an equal time, yet suffer very unequally. Both scripture and reason teach us that sinners will be punished unequally. But does rea-

son alone inform us whether in degree or in duration? Besides; cannot justice keep within proper bounds by limiting the *degree* without limiting the *time* of a transgressor's punishment? God can reduce the degree of positive suffering to an indefinite smallness, so as to make its eternal duration consistent with a just retribution for any measure of offence against the law, and majesty, and goodness of the Infinite Author of our lives and blessings.

And can we affirm that God is bound to restore and sanctify a creature, who has wilfully revolted from him and sinned away a time of grace? If not bound to restore him to holiness, he may abandon him to his chosen wickedness; and if so abandoned, the sinner will be ever adding to his guilt by new transgressions, and ever deserving additional punishment. Can we prove that such will not be the course of things?

Some argue that a temporary sin cannot deserve everlasting punishment. They do not consider that the greatness of a crime is not measured by the time occupied in its commission, nor the amount of punishment calculated only by the time of its continuance; and that punishment ought to continue as long, at least, as the criminal continues to break the law.

4. We know not the demerit of sin in the sight of God, nor the limits of Divine justice, nor the extent to which it may be good for God to exercise justice upon the despisers of his grace and the enemies of his Son: but these things we *do know*, that

the more terrible the penalty of the Divine law, the more forcible is the motive to obedience,—the greater the display of the importance of the law, the holiness of God, the evil of sin, the mercy of Redemption, and the value of religion. The more we reduce the terrors of the Lord, the more do we weaken all these considerations ; and these considerations respecting the law, holiness, sin, Divine mercy and redemption, are fundamental principles of the Gospel. If the law had no penalty, men would fear no sin, God would manifest no hatred of sin, redemption from sin would prove no mercy in God, and no merit in the blood of his Son. The nearer we bring the law to this useless imbecility, the nearer we bring the gospel to an insignificant theory, a mere butt for the blasphemer's scorn, and the villain's contempt ;—and which by setting all characters upon an equal footing, would completely deprive fallen man of encouragements to virtue and restraints from the alluring vices of the world.

You see the passions of evil men burst through the opposing fear of eternal punishment ; you see the fear of eternal punishment give the first awakening to their consciences, and the first impulse to repentance. May not God, for aught we know, see it necessary to hold up to this and to future worlds, a number of transgressors, suffering eternal evils, in order to reclaim other offenders and to set the most effectual guard around the cause of virtue and happiness ?

Once remove the fear of endless punishment ; let the threatenings of the Divine law be vague and indefinite ; the sinner will soon give loose to his passions and hopes of impunity. His fond delusion will reduce the coming wrath to the measure of his own indulgent views of sin.

5. Of all questions, this of eternal punishment meets with the strongest opposition from our prejudices. Self-love the most invincible of our passions, benevolence the sweetest of our affections, though in most cases they restrain each other, in this case unite their whole power of warping the judgment.

When we reason of future punishment, we are criminals judging in our own cause. We have broken the law of God, sin yet maintains some place in our hearts and consciences ; before us are death, judgment, and eternity. In this state of awful suspense, our self-love produces an irresistible desire to find our judge determined to save us from everlasting punishment. Most of all, they who are bent upon living contrary to the gospel, must feel a supreme longing to be persuaded that they may indulge their own pleasure, and yet find their judge propitious.

On the other hand, we see our dearest friends and relations in as much or more danger than ourselves. The thought of their suffering eternal punishment fills us with horror. And then such multitudes must be involved in the same ruin. The

magnitude of the evil is overwhelming. When the imagination is filled, and the soul sickened, with the image of eternal death, preying upon ourselves, our friends, our fellow-creatures, by millions; we exclaim under the resistless impulse of feeling, "God is too good to subject us to such a doom."

My friends, this is not the voice of reason, but of feeling which conquers reason.—Fix your mind now upon a company of poor mortals, in a dark, damp, loathsome dungeon; clanking their chains day and night; famishing, freezing, groaning, weeping, despairing. There are your dear parents, brothers, sisters, children, and the partner of your bosom. How heart-rending their cries! How cruel their sufferings! After many a tedious night, the prison-door opens; a band of pitiless tormentors come and drag them forth before a large assembly. See my mother's face haggard with sorrow—my child's limbs worn to the bone by chains and hunger! Oh! horrible! their cruel keepers are stripping off their rags: they seize the knotty whips; can I hear their moans? Can I look upon their torn and bleeding bodies? Can I contemplate their public disgrace, and the secret anguish of their souls? *What infernal tyrant has done this?*

Ah, my friends, we have only thought of the suffering; we have over-looked the cause. These are traitors and murderers, who had set law and justice at defiance, betrayed their country, and with cold-blooded cruelty, tortured to death the innocent.

They are not my kindred: they are strangers, who have spent their lives in robbery, burning, treason, torture and blood. A free pardon was offered them, if they would but repent of their deeds, and reform their lives. They scorned the offered mercy; and determined, as long as they had the power, to betray and murder still. Are you not ready to exclaim, *What partial judge has favoured them with a punishment so light, and so inadequate to their crimes?*

Thus you see how easy it is to feel indignation even at civil punishments, when we keep out of view the crimes of the sufferers, and consider them as our kindred. Now we do not know, as before observed, the evil of sinning against God, refusing his mercy and persevering in wilful impenitency during life. We do not know all the reasons which may determine infinite wisdom to make future punishment eternal, but suitable in degree to the several degrees of guilt. Certainly, however, God is not governed in his judgments by blind feelings of sympathy; which are suitable to our condition, but not to his steady purposes of wisdom. We see children more influenced by feeling to judge wrongly than men. Human judges ought not to give way to them: and we ought surely to distrust our own judgments concerning the incomprehensible subject before us, when we see honest men, through self-love, often contend for what is not their right; just judges not trusted with the trial of their own cause, nor that of their relations: the case of a criminal

generally viewed in the most favourable light by himself and his friends. If then revelation teach something concerning future punishment, which we would not have expected, we have abundant reason to give up our own judgment, as being founded on weakness, ignorance, partiality, and prejudice.

We shall now consider the duration of future punishment as a doctrine of Revelation. The proposition which I shall endeavour to maintain on this head, is most plainly expressed in the text :

These (namely, the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment.

Let us observe the connexion. Our Saviour was discoursing upon the general judgment of mankind at the end of the world. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from his goats: and he shall set the sheep [the righteous] on his right hand; but the goats [or wicked] on his left. Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.—Then shall he say also to them on his left hand, Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.—And these shall go away into everlasting punishment."

In this solemn discourse of Christ, the state of

the wicked after the last judgment is twice declared: first in the sentence pronounced upon them, Depart into *everlasting* fire; secondly, in the actual effect of that sentence, 'They shall go into *everlasting* punishment. By the word *everlasting* he certainly designed to teach us the duration of their punishment. He evidently laid great stress on that word; for he added it both in the sentence of the wicked and in the predicted execution of the sentence; though in the sentence of the righteous, nothing is said of the duration of their happiness.

How would a teachable inquirer, who had no criticisms to perplex, nor previous notions to bias him, understand our Saviour's doctrine? That future punishment would be *temporary*, and all men finally saved? No, the Saviour said no such thing. That the punishment would be *everlasting* or, what is the same—*endless*? Certainly; for so the Saviour declared repeatedly and emphatically.

But we are told that the translation conveys a different idea from the original Greek;—that the word [$\alpha\omega\nu\omicron\varsigma$] *aionios*, translated *everlasting*, is frequently applied to temporal things;—and *may* signify a temporary duration in this place. I find it necessary therefore to point out the use of this word in the New Testament, and to afford all my hearers some plain and satisfactory means of judging what idea it was intended by our Saviour to convey.

The Greek word [$\alpha\omega\nu\omicron\varsigma$] *aionios*, translated *everlasting*, is, I freely admit, sometimes applied

to things of a temporal nature. But in that it differs not from the word everlasting, which we frequently use in the same way. We speak of the everlasting hills, everlasting disgrace, renown, &c. when we have nothing in view beyond the affairs of this world. The same remark is applicable to the words eternal, forever, immortal, &c. which convey the same idea of duration. But in those cases we evidently use the words in a figurative sense, to magnify the idea of the long duration of things known to be temporal; and because they are known to be temporal, such a use of the words conveys no wrong notion. We at once make the necessary allowance.

Sometimes those words are employed to signify that the thing spoken of is never to return to its former state. Thus a slave for life is called a slave forever, because he is never to live in freedom. Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed with eternal fire, because they were never to recover from its effects. In such cases, the idea of eternity is conveyed negatively. But no one imagines from the occasional application of those words to temporal objects, that their proper signification is a temporary and limited duration; or how could we apply them to God and heaven and all endless things? When solemnly teaching doctrines, we never call a temporal object *eternal* or *everlasting*.

In like manner the Greek word. Sometimes, when applied to things of this world, it is to be

understood in a limited sense. But it most properly signifies endless duration ; as you will readily perceive, when I repeat to you some New Testament phrases in which it is used. “The everlasting God ; (1) ‘To God be honour and power everlasting ; (2) ‘The eternal glory of God ; (3) ‘The everlasting kingdom of God ; (4) ‘The eternal Spirit ; Christ obtained for us eternal Redemption, that the called might receive an eternal inheritance. (5) He became the author of eternal salvation. (6) The saints have a house eternal in the heavens ; (7) and, to mention but one more, the promised reward of the saints is usually called *eternal* or *everlasting life*.

Such are the objects to which the word *αιωνιος* is applied in the New Testament. If that word do not properly signify an eternal duration, it would not be employed to teach us the duration of all eternal things.

I will quote a text, which determines the proper sense of this word as decisively, as if it had been formed for no other purpose. It is 2 Corinthians iv. 17, 18.

“For our light affliction which is but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and *eternal* weight of glory : while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are

(1) Rom. xvi. 26.

(2) 1st Tim. vi. 16.

(3) 1st Pet. v. 10.

(4) 2d Pet. i. 2.

(5) Heb. ix. 12—15.

(6) Heb. v. 9.

(7) 2d Cor. v. 1.

[προσκαίρα] temporal, or for a time ; but the things which are not seen are [αιωνια] eternal.”

Here the apostle twice uses the same word [αιωνιος] in express opposition to other words which signify a limited duration. First, he contrasts the affliction of the present life with the glory in the life to come : the one is light, the other has a weight exceeding all excess ; the one is but for a moment compared with the eternal duration of the other. Then he draws a general contrast between the visible things of this world and the invisible things of the world to come : the former are for a time, that is, till the day of judgment ; the latter are not for a time, but eternal.

It was evidently the apostle's intention to heighten the contrast to the utmost. He uses such a power of expression as hardly any translation can reach ; and if there had been in the language a word more strongly and unequivocally expressive of infinite duration, he would have chosen it when he would make the present life and world seem but the twinkling of a moment. But in fact, the New Testament writers seldom employ any other adjective to teach us what is everlasting.*

* I say seldom, because *aidios*† is twice employed ; once to signify the eternity of God's power, and again to signify the eternal punishment of the fallen angels. See Rom. i. 39, and Jude 6. *Aphthartos*,‡ incorruptible, is twice applied to the Divine nature, once to heaven, once to the human body after the resurrection. Rom. i. 23, 1 Pet. i. 4. 1 Cor. xv. 52. 1 Tim. i. 17. Once also to the everlasting word

† αιδιος ‡ Αφθαρτος

On this passage I ground an obvious and incontrovertible rule, that whenever this word *αιωνιος* relates to things in the invisible future world, it signifies endless duration; for that is what Paul by the same word ascribes to those things, in opposition to the limited duration of this world's affairs.* And it is remarkable that this word is in the New Testament applied to a temporal object but once, and then obviously in a figurative sense. (Philemon 15). Our text is therefore correctly translated. The Greek word as strictly and appropriately signifies endless duration, as any word in the Greek or English language. It is the usual, standing adjective of the New Testament, to distinguish all eternal, from all temporary things. Eternal therefore must be the punishment of the wicked; unless the nature of the subject, the context, or other texts on the same subject, necessarily restrain us from understanding the word in its proper sense.

Sometimes the nature of the subject teaches us that a word is not to be taken in its usual and proper sense. But it is as possible for God to make

of God. 1 Pet. i. 23. And once to the saint's crown of glory. 1 Cor. ix. 25. The usual Scripture terms for endless duration are *αιωνιος*§ and its substantive *αιον*,||

* Not that every distinct act and circumstance in our future states must be eternal; but the states themselves, considered as good or bad, together with all the objects connected with them, whose nature admits of permanency. There will doubtless be successive actions and events in heaven; but heaven and the state of the saints in it, are not therefore the less eternal. So of hell.

§ *αιωνιος* || *αιον*

punishment eternal as temporary ; and how long he has determined to make it, we can ascertain only from the language of his word.

Is there any thing in the passage connected with our text, which should lead us to a different construction ? Far from it ; both here and every where else, the judgment of the last day is represented as final ; the wicked are left in their eternal fire and eternal punishment, without the least intimation of any possible deliverance.

Nay, the context does more than leave the enemies of God to their doom, it fixes them there as long as heaven itself endures. Read the whole verse in which the text is found : “ These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment ; but the righteous into *everlasting* life.” The same word is used to express the duration of both. Our Divine Teacher, solemnly instructing us concerning the future states of men, when the truth depends upon the exact use of language, first declares that the wicked shall be consigned to everlasting fire ; then instead of limiting the expression, he concludes the whole doctrine, by affirming, in the same breath, without distinction or restriction, that the states of the wicked and the righteous are both to be everlasting.

In like manner the prophet Daniel, speaking of the resurrection, says that they who have done good shall awake to *everlasting* life, and they who have done evil to *everlasting* contempt. (Dan. xii. 2.) Both in the original Hebrew and the Greek of the

Septuagint, the same word is used to express the duration of the life of the righteous, and of the disgrace of the wicked. The apostles often quote from the Old Testament according to the Greek of the Septuagint instead of the Hebrew, and the word in the Septuagint is the same as that in our text.

To shew, (if it be not superfluous) the force of this mode of speaking: suppose our Saviour in teaching the doctrine of a future state, had first said the wicked should be sentenced to a temporary fire; and then had concluded by affirming, that these should go away into *temporary* punishment, but the righteous to *temporary* life. Would you have understood from his language, that the one was *temporary* and the other *eternal*? Or suppose he had said, that the wicked should go into punishment for an *uncertain* space of time, but the righteous into life for an *uncertain* space of time. Would he have conveyed to you the idea, that the life was certainly eternal, but that the punishment was certainly to end? No, you would spurn such absurd interpretations. But can it lessen the absurdity, that the word is *everlasting*, instead of *temporary* or *indefinite*. Common sense teaches us that when the same thing is affirmed at once of the duration of future life and future punishment, it is denied that they differ in duration, whether it be temporary, uncertain, or everlasting.

But still if other texts upon the same subject declared a difference between the duration of future

rewards and punishments, we should have to reconcile them as well as we could. But the inspired language is uniform; always without exception, expressing the continuance of punishment, heaven, God and all endless things, in the same or similar terms.

Paul says that the wicked at the day of judgment shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.* Here is still the same word in Greek. Our Saviour says in Matthew, "It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into *everlasting* fire." (Matt. xviii. 8.) In Mark we have the same sentiment but a different word. "It is better for thee to go into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that *never shall be quenched*; where their worm *dieth not* and their fire is *not quenched*." (Mark ix. 43, 44.) The fire which in Matthew is [*αιωνιος*] everlasting, is a fire that *never shall be quenched*: and still deepening the impression, our Saviour adds, that *there* the wicked are the prey of a *never-dying* worm, and of fire *not quenched*. Here then is an inspired definition of everlasting punishment. Does it restrain the word everlasting to a limited sense, or not? In other places that fire is called *unquenchable* fire.† If its guilty victims should ever rise to heaven, or

* 2 Thess. i. 9. † Mark iii. 12. Luke iii. 17.

sink into utter annihilation, how should it be *everlasting, unquenched, unquenchable, never-to-be-quenched* fire, with a worm that *dies not*? If the fuel of the fire, and the food of the worm, be ever consumed, the fire is extinguished, and the worm dies.*

As [*αιωνιος*] *aionios* signifies eternal, so [*αιων*] *aion* its substantive, signifies ever or eternity, in its original proper sense.† But sometimes it sig-

* The word Gehenna, translated Hell, is derived from a Hebrew phrase signifying the Valley of Hinnom: which was a vale by Jerusalem, where the apostate Jews made their children pass through fire to the idol Moloch. The place was therefore defiled by King Josiah, and made a depository for the filth and carcases of the city. Worms bred in the carcases, and fires were kept up to consume them. All these circumstances made it a place so horrid to the imagination, that it came to be an emblem of hell; and the name of it was afterwards frequently applied to the place of future punishment. The same valley was also called Tophet. 2 Kings xxiii. 10. Jer. vii. 31, 32 and chap. xix. Hence some have supposed that the fire of Hell is called everlasting, and unquenchable, in allusion to the constant fires in Tophet. But it is much more reasonable to think that Hell fire is called *everlasting* to distinguish it from that in Tophet, which should be quenched, and the worm *never-dying*, to distinguish it from the worms that do die. But we are referred to Isaiah lxvi. 22, for the same expressions that are used by our Saviour, but there applied to dead carcases. That text rather confirms the remark just made. The prophet was describing the last judgment and the ruin of the wicked, under the figure of a great slaughter in the sight of God's people. Therefore he says, their fire, contrary to other fires, shall not be quenched, and their worm, contrary to other worms, shall not die.

† Aristotle, Philo, Phavorinus, and the Greek etymologists in general, derive *aion*‡ from *aei*,§ ever, and *on*,|| existing. Ever-existing duration is therefore the primary idea of the term. But the word is distinctly applied to the various respects in which eternity may be considered. 1st Eternity may be considered simply and absolutely as

‡ *αιων* § *αιε* || *ων* ¶

nifies an age, dispensation, or state of being. How then can we know its exact meaning in a particular place? By this plain rule; when it relates to things belonging only to this visible world, it necessarily bears a limited sense: when to things beyond this world, it signifies an absolute eternity; according to the apostolic rule, things seen are temporal, things not seen, (namely those of a future state) are eternal. To give a clearer idea of the matter, I beg your attention to this observation. The New Testament considers all duration as divided into ages, or distinct periods and states of existence; some temporal and some eternal. Before the creation of the world there was an eternity or

without beginning, and, progression or succession. Such is the existence of God. In this sense Plato uses the term in his *Timæus*; and so do other writers. 2d, Eternity may be considered in reference to a particular point of time. Then there is a past and a future eternity. In this sense it is often used in Scripture, as well as by heathen and christian writers. 3d, Eternity being thus connected with motion and change, may be considered as time ever moving onwards and producing successive events, some past, some passing, and some yet to come. As time in this absolute sense will never end, it is commensurate with future eternity. 4th, Eternity being thus united with time in general, comes to be considered as distinguished into *various*, successive parts, beginning with creation, when time began its course with the proper eternity, and will ever proceed with it. We the creatures of this world, naturally consider all duration as being either before the world, from the world to this or some remarkable period of time, or from any one period to another; as from the creation to the flood, from the flood to Moses, from Moses to Christ, from Christ to the end of the world, and from that onwards forever. Thus by an easy transition, *aion** was applied sometimes to signify certain periods of time, or certain states of things, as the world itself, &c. But when it refers to things before or after this world, it signifies eternity.

* *aion*

Π

infinite age. From the creation to the end of the world and day of judgment, are several temporal ages or dispensations of religion; after judgment there is to be another infinite or endless age. But since death divides the whole existence of man into two very different states and ages, a temporal and an eternal; and since his temporal age is connected with this visible world, so *αἰών* is sometimes used to express this distinction; the present age, is a scriptural expression for the present life and world; the age to come for the eternal world, in which man has an endless age. This view of the ages, temporal and eternal, will make the Scripture language upon the subject, plain and consistent; any other view will make it unaccountably perplexed, and utterly irreconcilable.*

I shall now give you some examples of the use of this word, premising, however, that it is employed in several forms and phrases: sometimes singly,

* This doctrine of the ages, temporal and eternal, is proved by a comparison of the texts in which *aion* occurs. I shall cite a few. 1 Cor. x. 11. "Upon us [*ta tele ton aionon*†] the ends of the ages have come;" that is, the last of the temporal ages or dispensations. Matt. xxiv. 3. [*tes suntelias ton aionos*‡] "of the completion of the age;" that is of the world. 2 Tim. iv. 10. Having loved [*ton nun aiona*§] the present age, life or world. Matt. xii. 32. [*oute en touto aioni oute en to mellonti.*¶] Neither in this age, world, or state of being, nor in the future. Acts xv. 18. Known unto God [*ap' aionos**] from the age, that is the eternity before creation, were all his works. Examples of the future age after the end of the world follow in the body of the discourse.

† αἰων ‡ τα τελη των αιωνων § της συνληλειας
 τς αιωνος || τον νυν αιωνα ¶ υλε εν τστω αιωνι
 υλε εν τω μελλοντι. ** απ' αιωνος

“The word of the Lord abideth or standeth good [εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα] to the age, that is, to eternity.” (1) “Christ continueth [εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα] to the eternal age.” (2) “He that doeth the will of God abideth [εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα] to the age of eternity.” (3) Christ promises his people [ζῶν αἰῶνιον] eternal life, and immediately adds that they shall not perish [εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα] to the age—to eternity. (4) One example more of this phrase. “For the wicked is reserved the blackness of darkness [εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα] to the age” (5)—namely the same eternal age, during which the righteous shall not perish.

Sometimes the ages, in the plural is used for eternity. “Christ shall reign over his people [εἰς τὰς αἰῶνας] to the ages; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” (6) To strengthen the expression, the word is frequently doubled and compounded with itself. For example, “Thy throne, O God, is [εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τῶ αἰῶνος] to the age of the age.” (7) But to express eternity in the very strongest manner, this compound phrase is used in the plural number. “To God be glory [εἰς τὰς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων] to the ages of the ages.” (8) And this phrase is never in the New Testament applied exclusively to the ages of time, but only to the ages of all futurity.

I have introduced these remarks, to prepare your minds for estimating the proper force of the argu-

(1) 1 Pet. i. 25. (2) Heb. vii. 24. (3) 1 John ii. 17.

(4) John x. 28. (5) Jude 13, and 2d Pet. ii. 17. (6) Luke i. 33.

(7) Heb. i. 8. (8) Gal. i. 15.

ment which I shall now propose to you from the Book of Revelation. In that book the strong phrase "*the ages of the ages*," is frequently used, and no other phrase of the same meaning is used. I shall mention all the subjects to which it is applied in that Book. "To God be glory and power to the ages of the ages—that is *forever and ever*:" (1) "God liveth forever and ever:" (2) "Blessing and glory to Him that sitteth upon the throne and to the lamb *forever and ever*:" (3) "I (says Christ) was dead and behold I am alive *forever and ever*." (4) "Her smoke (the smoke of mystical Babylon after her fall) ascendeth up *forever and ever*" (5)—her ruin shall be endless. "Christ shall reign *forever and ever*:" (6) "The redeemed in heaven shall reign *forever and ever*." (7) There is but one more subject, to which the phrase is applied: "If any worship the beast and his image (that is, join the enemies of true religion) he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone—and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up *forever and ever*." (8) Again; "The Devil that deceived the nations was cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and the false prophet are, and they shall be tormented day and night *forever and ever*.—And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat thereon.—And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened which

(1) i. 6. (2) iv. 9, 10, & x. 6, & xv. 7. (3) v. 13 and vii. 12.
 (4) i. 18. (5) xix. 3. (6) xi. 15. (7) xxii. 5. (8) xiv. 10, 11.

is the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things written in the books according to their works.—And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire,” (9)—namely that fire in which it had just been said the Devil and the beast, and the false prophet and their followers, should be tormented *forever and ever*.*

What things then saith the Spirit in the book of this prophecy, shall be *forever and ever*? Only these ; the ruin of Christ’s enemies represented by the mystical Babylon ; the life, perfections, glory and reign of God and of Christ ; the felicity of the redeemed in heaven : and the torments of the damned in the lake of fire.

(9) xx. 10—15.

* It is alleged that *aion*† cannot strictly signify eternity, because in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, the particles *eti* and *epekeina*‡ are sometimes added to give it the greater emphasis. These examples occur : Exod. xv. 18. The Lord shall reign *ton aiona, kai ep’ aiona kai eti*,§ forever and ever and farther.—Dan. xii. 3. They shall shine as the stars *eis ton aiona kai eti*,|| forever and farther. Mic. iv. 5. We will walk in the name of the Lord *eis ton aiona kai epekeina*,¶ forever and beyond it.

I remark that these are not the only instances in which the Septuagint translators made bad Greek for the sake of making their version appear precisely literal. It was not to give explicitness to *aion*,** that such particles are a few times added ; for the classical Greek writers and the apostles never felt the need of such an addition when they wanted to express eternity. It was to give what seemed a literal rendering of the Hebrew phrase†† literally in English forever and ever, that they added *eti* and *epekeina*.‡‡ §§ both mean *ever*, or eternity by

† αιων ‡ ετι & επεκεινα § τον αιωνα, και επι αιωνα και ετι
|| εις τον αιωνα και ετι ¶ εις τον αιωνα και επεκεινα

** αιων †† לעלם ועד ‡‡ ετι & επεκεινα §§ ער & עלם

But since this book, more than any other, unfolds the secrets of futurity, and carries its visions quite beyond the judgment into the abysses of eternity; perhaps it may afford some hint that the ages of ages of torment is not as long as the ages of ages of God and of heaven. Cheerfully would I find and improve such a hint. We hear indeed of death and Hades being cast into the lake of fire.* But this only informs us, that after the resurrection of all the dead, temporal death and Hades (or the intermediate state of souls between death and judgment) will have lost their power, and, as if they were condemned persons, will be consigned to punishment, for hurting the people of God.

We hear in the same place of the second death. But that affords no hope; for to be cast into the lake of fire is expressly called the second death, and the only consequence mentioned is torment forever and ever.†

themselves, when applied to things capable of eternal duration. Both are joined for the same reason that we join *ever* to *forever*; not because each singly does not fully express the thing intended, but because the union of both gives the mind a stronger impression of it.

* Rev. xx. 14. Hades, sometimes rendered *the grave*, and sometimes *Hell*, is never used in Scripture like Gehenna, for the place of final punishment; but for the place where departed souls dwell until the resurrection. In it is Paradise assigned to the righteous, where our Saviour's soul abode while separate from the body. ' There too is a separate place for the wicked, who undergo some sufferings, but not as great as when they shall be cast body and soul into the lake of fire. See Campbell on the Gospels. Prelim. Dissert. vi.

† If we suppose the second death must needs be like the first, all that can be inferred from it is the dissolution of the body. To affirm

On the other hand the book of this prophecy gives indirect but unequivocal evidence, that the guilty dwellers in the fiery lake can never hope for deliverance. You have just heard of the book of life. We are told in another chapter that the names of some men were, and the names of the rest were not, written in that book *from the foundation of the world*. The book of life is therefore the eternal foreknowledge of God. But those not written in that book are to be cast into the lake of fire; and they, we are assured in the prophecy, shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only they whose names are in the book of life.* If they were excluded only for a season, they would have been as certainly inscribed in the book of life from the foundation of the world, as the others; for difference of time makes no difference in Divine foreknowledge; nor could it be truly said that only the part found in the book at the day of judgment should enter heaven. All would enter after a while.

that it will either annihilate the soul, or transfer the sinner to heaven, is mere unwarranted assertion. The first death produces no such effects, or the wicked would not need the second death to produce them. And after the second death, will the soul go to heaven *bodiless*, and thus be inferior to the other saints? Or will there be a resurrection of the body after the second death? Where has God revealed any such things? And who can know them without revelation?

Some divines have supposed, from the punishment of the wicked being sometimes called destruction, perishing, &c.; and from the mention of the second death; that the penal fire would finally consume the bodies of the wicked, and leave their souls an everlasting prey to remorse and despair. This is at least as far as (I think farther than) the language of scripture will warrant us to go.

* Rev. xvii. 8. and xxi. 27.

Yet notwithstanding, had we an intimation that the wicked were to be sanctified by their pains, hope might still glimmer upon their dark abode. But revelation opens no thought of that kind. Hell is often described as a place of wrath, vengeance, punishment; never as a place of purification. This prophecy excludes the idea. After the vision is closed—the judgment over,—the righteous in glory,—the wicked in torment;—the judge himself proclaims to the prophet; “He that is unjust and filthy, let him be unjust and filthy still; he that is righteous and holy, let him be righteous and holy still.”* Facts forbid us to refer this sentence to the present life, where unjust men may and do become righteous. It must be referred to some state where characters become unchangeably good or bad. Necessity, and the connexion of the discourse, direct us to heaven and hell for the application.

I shall close the scripture proof with two more texts, the one directly affirming, the other necessarily implying eternal punishment.

Our Saviour assures us there is a sin absolutely unpardonable. The declarations concerning the blasphemer against the Holy Ghost, found in three of the Gospels,† are these: “He shall not be forgiven;”—he shall not be forgiven [*εις τον αιωνα*] to eternity (the very phrase used by Christ in relation to his people; They shall not perish [*εις τον αιωνα*])

* Rev. xxii. 11. † Luke xii. 10. Mark iii. 29. Mat. xii. 31.

to eternity)—but he is bound over* to eternal damnation;† (so in the place just alluded to, he said of his people, “I give unto them eternal life,” using the same word *αιωνος*;)—he shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.‡ Language can go no further in giving emphatical explicitness to a doctrine. I remark only that the Scripture makes no distinction in the duration of different men’s future punishment. The blasphemer against the Holy Ghost cannot escape it; others may by timely repentance; but if they neglect that, they and all are consigned to the same doom.

The second text is this expression of Christ: “Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; it were good for him not to have been born.” (Matt. xxvi. 24.) He delivers this senti-

* *enochos*,† in danger is the common translation; but here at least the word signifies unavoidable liability.

‡ *aioniou kriseos*.§ So Heb. vi. 2, *aioniou krimatos*,|| eternal judgment. But why called eternal except for its consequences? And why so, if its consequences be but temporary to the wicked? But in truth the scripture language concerning the judgment always declares or implies the eternity of its decisions.

¶ The word here translated *world* is *aion*,** which being distinguished into present and future, signifies the two ages or states of man, the temporal and eternal. It cannot mean two ages or periods of time in this world, because both refer to the same person; it shall not be forgiven *him*, the individual sinner, neither in the present, &c. But this does not imply that other sins are forgiven in a future state; it is plainly and singly designed to cut off all manner of hope. It may allude to the day of judgment, when the saints shall be publicly forgiven.

† *ενοχος* § *αιωνιου κρισεως* || *αιωνιου κριματος* ** *αιων*

E

ment as his own, and the correctness of it depends upon Judas Iscariot's suffering more than he ever did or will enjoy. An eternity of heaven's bliss would make it infinitely good for him to have been born, however long a purgatory he would have to pass through to heaven.

Want of time, not of matter, obliges me here to close the scripture testimony. Were the evidence as clear in favour of your personal admission into heaven, I am sure you would esteem it satisfactory. But hard as it is for sinful mortals to receive the doctrine, its scripture evidence has subdued the prejudices of Christians generally in every age, from the days of the apostles.

It has been asserted that our translations deceive us in these latter times ; that education and habit lead us to affix a wrong sense to words, &c. To disprove such assertions, I have dealt much with the original, I hope so plainly as to show the meaning of the inspired writers. To remove the whole pretence for such assertions, I will briefly state the testimony of the learned and pious Greek fathers of the first two hundred years after Christ. They received the gospel in their own language, fresh from the tongues and pens of the apostles. They speak of future punishment in these terms : "We teach that every man goes to eternal punishment or reward ;—that the wicked, body and soul, shall suffer a punishment that is eternal, and not for a period of 1000 years, as the philosopher Plato says.—

When Christ comes to judgment, he will send the bodies of the wicked endued with eternal feeling into eternal fire; and what kind of feeling they will have, may be judged from these sayings, Their worm shall not cease, and their fire shall not be quenched;—then shall they repent, when they shall not profit by repentance.—Their loss is eternal and without end.”* Many and various expressions of this kind they use, to exclude all doubt of their meaning. With them the Latin writers of those times agree, declaring future punishments to consist in infinite torments to which there is no limit nor end.† Nor do they deliver these as only their private sentiments. They frequently state them as the undisputed doctrine of the church. So that the whole church, Greeks and Latins, in the first ages after the apostles, understood from tradition and scripture, that eternal punishment was an unquestionable doctrine of the gospel.

Afterwards arose Origen, almost as fond of Plato’s philosophy, as of the Gospel. He, after Plato, taught that mankind would be good and bad, happy and miserable by turns, forever. Yet he defined eternal rewards and punishments to be the doctrine of the church.‡ Few indeed but those counted heretics, ever departed from that doctrine.

* Justin Martyr Apol. i. Irenæus v. 27. *steresis autem æternis kai ateleutetos*.†

‡ Cyprian and Tertullian.

§ Whitby on Heb. vi. 2.

† *στερησις αὐτῶν αἰώνιος καὶ ἀτελευτήτος*

Moreover, both Jews and Heathens in our Saviour's time, generally believed that some men would be eternally punished. The Pharisees were of this opinion, and they were the most numerous and popular sect of the Jews. So we learn from Josephus.* Philo, a celebrated Jewish writer of the same age, says that punishment after death is, To live and be ever dying, and in a manner to suffer the pains of an endless death.

This being the common opinion, wherever the Gospel was first preached, upon a subject of infinite importance, we might expect our Saviour and his apostles to declare the true doctrine plainly; and if the common opinion were false, to abolish the tremendous error, by direct, unequivocal contradiction. So they usually dealt with prevailing errors. One error embraced by some Jews on this very point they did contradict with the utmost care and plainness—the opinion that the punishment of wicked Jews would be temporary, but that of Gentiles eternal. How often do they teach us that there is no difference of that kind between Jew and Gentile!† But in all the places where it was their solemn purpose to teach us the whole truth concerning future punishment, do they no where deny its eternity or assert its limited duration? No, not in any place whatever. What then do they build upon, who thus deny and assert? Upon some texts which do not directly relate to the subject;

* Antiq. xviii. 1. Jewish War ii. 6.

† Rom. ii. 9—11.

and which are peculiarly capable, by themselves, of different interpretations; but considered in their whole connexion, are far from answering the intended purpose. I shall mention those chiefly relied upon, and briefly suggest how they are inapplicable or misconstrued.

In the fifth chapter of Romans, Paul in comparing the effects of Adam's fall with the effects of Christ's redemption uses some expressions supposed to favour the doctrine of universal salvation. The 18th verse is chiefly relied upon. "For as by the offence of one man judgment came upon all men to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life."

The context and the uniform tenor of Scripture, lead to this interpretation; "Judgment came upon all men *who fell in Adam*, to condemnation; the free gift came upon all men *who believe in Christ*, to justification of life.

We are constrained to this interpretation by unquestionable authority of Scripture.

1. Because justification unto eternal life, is every where limited to penitent believers; especially in the foregoing part of this Epistle where it is largely treated. Among other expressions we have these, "God sent forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith—that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."* "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through Christ."†

* Rom. iii. 25.

† v. 1.

2. Because justification saves from wrath. A few verses before the text in question, Paul had said, "Being now justified, we shall be saved from wrath through Christ." But many will suffer the wrath of God after the day of judgment, as Paul says in this same Epistle. He warns the impenitent that they are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath; when God will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon all them who do not obey the truth.*

3. Because the obtaining of faith and justification is limited to the present life, as the scriptures every where testify. "If ye believe not (says Jesus) that I am Christ, ye shall die in your sins;—and whither I go ye cannot come."†

4. Because in the verse immediately preceding the text, the benefit of redemption is limited to a particular class of characters. "Much more they which receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by Jesus Christ."

But if the gift of justification have come upon every human being, we must affix such a meaning to justification as to make it consistent with the final condemnation and punishment of the wicked. Accordingly some have understood by it the resurrection to life of the bodies of all men; others have understood by it the means and opportunity of obtaining pardon and eternal life. It is more rational to adopt either of these interpretations, than to

* ii. 5—9.

† John viii. 21—24.

make a very doubtful one drive back the whole current of clear scripture.

Another passage in the 8th chapter of Romans is quoted for the same purpose. "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God : for the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that subjected it : in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. For the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

The exact import of this passage is doubtful ; its general design evidently is to contrast the disorders and miseries of the present world with the glorious state of things to be produced by the resurrection. Paul introduces it by saying that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in the saints. He adds at the conclusion of the passage that not only the whole creation groans, but they also who had the first fruits of the Spirit groaned, waiting for the redemption or resurrection of their body, when all the effects of sin would be gone away. Thus we are plainly referred to the resurrection of mankind at the end of the world for the accomplishment of what the passage alludes to.* It cannot therefore mean the universal salva-

* Compare the following texts with this passage. 2 Pet. iii. 7—13. Rev. xxi. 3, 7, 8 and xxii. 3. Col. iii. 4. 1st Thess. i. 7—12.

vation of mankind ; for we have many of the most undoubted assurances of Scripture, that, at the resurrection, a part of mankind shall rise to condemnation and be sentenced to everlasting punishment.

The passage is a figurative description of the disorders and miseries to which this lower creation is subjected through the fall of man, and of the glorious change which shall take place at the resurrection, when the wicked shall be banished to another place, the creation re-fashioned for an abode of righteousness, &c. Some think the conversion of the world in the latter days to be intended by the deliverance of the creation into the liberty of the sons of God. At any rate, whoever considers the whole chapter may easily see that universal salvation was not in the apostle's thoughts.

Again ; the final salvation of all men is argued from two or three texts which say that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess to Christ, and that this shall be done by all in heaven and earth.*

But Paul very reasonably explains all such texts, by referring their fulfilment to the day of judgment, when every man must confess his deeds and bow to the sentence of the judge. In the 14th chapter of Romans, the apostle quotes the same words, and immediately draws this conclusion, " So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God."

Again, Paul says it was the purpose of God " to gather together in one all things in Christ, both

* Phil. ii. 9, 10.

which are in heaven and which are on earth ;” and “through Christ to reconcile them to himself ;” *—The meaning is that believers, Jewish and Gentile, saints in heaven and saints on earth, are all united into one harmonious body in Christ ; Jew and Gentile, formerly such enemies, are now reconciled to one another, and both to God. This interpretation is most agreeable to the context and to the evident design of the writer in all the passages relative to the same subject.† The church is still the subject of discourse ; the union and reconciliation of her members in her head, the Redeemer, is still the leading idea. The ungodly, who are without Christ, and reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished, are not in the view of those texts at all.

Again, John says that Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil.‡ Sin he says is the work of the Devil ; by destroying the sins of his people, Christ destroys the works of the Devil. The text does not affirm that the sins of all men shall be destroyed.

Again ; “God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”§ But this text may signify what God wills us to do and has provided suitable means to enable us to do ; yet it does not follow, because he has made it our duty to be saved, that none shall be lost, and that instead

* Eph. i. 10. Col. i. 20.

† Col. i. 18—23. Eph. ii. 11—19. 2 Cor. v. 18—21. and vi. 1.

‡ 1 John iii. 8.

§ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

of *many*, as our Saviour says, *none at all* walk in the broad way to destruction.

I know of but one text more, that is much relied upon to prove universal salvation. It is in the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians; that sublime discourse of the resurrection. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, then they that are Christ's at his coming." (Whence we learn that the wicked shall rise last.) "Then is the end, when he shall deliver the kingdom to God the Father;* when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority. For he must reign until he hath put all his enemies under his feet. Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed."

I confess that, in my mind, this passage does, as much as any in the Bible, banish every lingering hope of universal salvation. Repeatedly and beyond all dispute, the scriptures declare that the dead shall rise at the end of the world and the day of judgment, and that the righteous shall then be taken to heaven, the wicked consigned to everlasting fire. Then death the last enemy will have been destroyed. He is called the last enemy because the last sufferings of the saints are from him, and their last loss, the loss of the body, is from him. When that loss is gloriously repaired by the resurrection,

* εἰτα το τέλος, οἷαν παραδῶ, κ. λ.

their last enemy is destroyed. Then also will Christ have put down all his enemies and all their power and authority, by sending them into everlasting punishment. Then (says Paul) is the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God the Father. We have express authority for saying that he shall forever reign over his people in heaven.* The kingdom which he will then deliver up is the Mediatorial kingdom—the power which the Father has given him over all things for the benefit of his church. The purposes for which he reigns will then have been fully accomplished (as the text informs us,) by the ruin of all his enemies, and the complete salvation of all his elect. He will then resign the office of Mediator between God and men. Never more will he intercede for sinners—never more will his blood avail for pardon—never more will his power be exercised to deliver the captives of the Devil, nor his Spirit go forth to sanctify :—his gospel—his ministers—his mercy—will be clean gone forever. These are the necessary consequences of the resignation of his kingdom as Mediator. This text accords with the uniform language of Scripture, which knows no salvation but that which is begun by sanctification in this life, and is completed at the resurrection. Not one word in the volume of eternal truth points to any other. Thus the last hope of the impenitent sinner dies. The

* Rev. xi. 15. Luke i. 33.

only alternative is, Repent in this world, or Bid adieu to heaven, forever and ever.

Yet would the sinner fain plead the goodness of God against the denunciations of his word. Truly, God is good. He has written the character of his benevolence upon a thousand of his works. What a beautiful world has he made for us! How has he furnished it with accommodations, necessary, useful, beautiful, sublime! What store of objects to gratify the senses, to delight the fancy, to exercise the understanding, and to excite every pure and noble affection of the heart! How variously beautiful the scenes of nature! Seas, lands, rills purling through shady vallies;—plains spreading forth the exuberance of fields and meadows, stocked with verdant plants and sportive animals; hills lifting up their gentle acclivities, mountains veiling their lofty tops with the clouds of heaven.

Then look upwards by night or day. Behold the sun in his glory, the moon with her mild radiance, the hosts of far-twinkling stars. The hand that made all those things, formed us with faculties to enjoy them. But we broke his laws—abused his gifts—and pertinaciously refused him obedience, gratitude, and communion with our hearts. Then our insulted Creator also manifested a Saviour's mercy. The price of our redemption was the gift and crucifixion of God's only begotten Son. He freely gave him up for us all. Law and justice required our destruction; the heavenly Redeemer to

open a way of pardon, comes in humiliation, abides in travail and grief, departs in agony and death. Then his heralds sound the joyful proclamation, Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ to every penitent believer. But this is the last remedy. He that believeth not, shall be damned. Now salvation may be found. But never more. Such is the substance of the evangelical message. Thus does God manifest infinite goodness and mercy; by making such an offer, at such an expense to such characters. However beautiful this world; yet even in its primitive glory when Eden bloomed, it was but a faint type of heaven. The God of love offers you heaven itself, upon the most gracious terms, as a free, irrevocable gift. But some of you, I fear, have to this day rejected the offer, and preferred your transgressions to holiness, for your character, heaven for your home, and God for your Father. Perhaps some of you have rejected all these with bitter contempt. God has chosen thus far to display his goodness towards you, and such is the use you have made of the indulgence. Is justice a perfection of the universal Judge? Where then sleeps his justice? When will it awake? How will it exhibit the hatred to consummate wickedness of Him who is thrice Holy? His infinite abhorrence of the most atrocious enormity, the most infernal ingratitude, and the most damnable despite to His

bleeding mercy—shall be at last revealed. Oh Sinner, after thy hard and impenitent heart, thou art treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of thy God. Hear what he has pledged his veracity to do with you, except you avert it by a timely repentance.

Disease and pain must waste your body, until death closes your eyes upon sun, moon, and stars—upon all the beauties of nature—upon kindred and friends—the endearments of love and the comforts of home:—and you must never know them more. Your spirit must be imprisoned in darkness, till all the generations of men have past away, and you hear from above the trump of God. Impelled by omnipotence, you must return to your grave, resume your body, and open your eyes once more. Think you to behold on earth the calm and beautiful scene upon which you had closed your eyes. Oh, dreadful change! The sun is quenched—the moon is blood—the stars have fallen—flames burst the globe—mountains melt away—thunders peal around the sky—and far beyond it glitters the throne of Christ. The saints are already on his right hand, like a firmament of stars:—to his left, streaming up from the abyss of darkness come the Devil and his angels. You and all like you must join the gloomy throng.—The judge opens his mouth—*Depart* resounds and thrills through the universe. Then what remains for you?—The worm of conscience—the

fire of wrath—the blackness of despair—devils—
liars—traitors—murderers—blasphemers—rage—
terror—remorse—weeping—wailing—and gnashing
of teeth. O eternity—eternity!—wilt thou never
end?—No—never—never.